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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, March 27, 1934.

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Hello folks: Among the many 1934 seed and plant catalogs that I received this year there is one of an eastern plant grower which has on the front and back cover pages natural size color illustrations of two of the seven new varieties of strawberries that have been introduced by the Department of Agriculture during the past three or four years. We call them the "lucky seven" collection of new strawberries. The two pictured on the covers of the catalog are the Dorsett and Fairfax and the reproduction is so natural that you're tempted to try to pick them off and eat them.

Now, I've been warned recently that if I don't stop talking about good things to eat just around dinner time when everybody here in the studio is hungry that I'm going to get myself into trouble, but talking about good things to eat is my line and I want to make you all so hungry for good fruits like nice ripe strawberries that you will want to plant a new patch in your garden this spring or whenever the proper time comes. Speaking about the new varieties of strawberries that George M. Darrow, one of the plant wizzards of our horticultural division, has been originating and sending out, here is what one authority says. (Quote) "Never before in 48 years' experience in growing strawberries have we seen any varieties look as good to us as Dorsett and Fairfax. Both have proved far superior up to this time to all other early varieties." (End of quote)

I really don't know of any fruit that is more appetizing than well-ripened strawberries, and the nice thing about strawberries is that they can be grown for home use in practically every nook and corner of the country. You folks who live in Florida and the lower south are enjoying ripe berries and have been enjoying them all winter, but those of us who live in the snow regions will not be getting strawberries from our gardens for some time.

You see we can grow strawberries for home use on almost any good garden soil, provided it is well drained and contains plenty of organic matter or humus so that the plants will not suffer from drought. Strawberries want a moderately rich soil and if you can plant them on new ground where there are not many weeds you will be spared a lot of hand weeding. If you plant strawberries in your garden by all means place them to one side where they will not interfere with plowing or working the remainder of the garden.

As to the time of planting, in Florida and along the Gulf Coast late summer or fall planting is practiced but spring or very early summer planting is recommended for the remainder of the country. The main thing is to get your land in the best possible condition and to set clean, healthy plants having a big mass of fresh, live roots. Don't set your strawberry plants so deep that the soil will be washed into the hearts during heavy rains, and don't set them so shallow that they will stand above the ground with the roots exposed.

(over)



The two most common methods of growing strawberries are the hill system, where the plants are set in hills and a very few new plants allowed to form, and the matted-row system by which a fairly large number of plants are allowed to form and make a matted row. When you grow your strawberries by the matted-row system the rows should be at least 3 1/2 feet apart and the plants set 20 to 24 inches apart in the rows. The original plants will sent out runners and form new plants making a matted row 18 inches wide or wider.

Now a word about varieties for the home garden. For many years the Klondyke and the Missionary have been the leading varieties for the South, except in Kentucky and Missouri where Aroma has been the chief sort. In 1932, the Department introduced the SOUTHLAND a wonderful home garden variety for the South. The Southland grows to good size and has excellent quality but is too soft for shipping. For many years the old Premier, or Howard 17, has been, and still is, a leading variety for the region extending from northern North Carolina to the Canadian line, but now the Fairfax and the Dorsett that I mentioned are being planted extensively in home gardens through the northern sections.

For the Northern Great Plains section Darrow recommends Howard 17, Dunlap, and Progressive, the Progressive being an everbearer. The Mastodon, another everbearer, is recommended for planting in home gardens of the North. The secret of getting good crops of fall berries of these everbearers is to keep the plants well irrigated and growing without any serious check during midsummer. If you allow the plants to go into a rest period during the summer they will not form buds for the fall crop. Incidentally, the fruit buds of the spring-fruited varieties are formed in the fall after the rains start.

Getting back to the matter of varieties for a moment let me suggest that you plant early, medium and late varieties so as to have ripe berries over as long a period as possible. I want to mention one more variety, the Blakemore, another of the Department's recent introductions. The Blakemore is a very firm, tart berry, that is excellent for canning and preserves. It is recommended for the region extending from southern Maryland to central Georgia, and westward but not for the northern regions except in a trial way.